

N E W S - L E T T E R

of the

CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION

Number 1

Volume I

February, 1951

Highlights of the First Meeting of the Conference

The Conference met for the first time under the title Conference 12: The Psychoanalytic Approach to Literary Criticism at 9:15 on December 29, 1950. Over 30 members attended, with Roy P. Basler acting as chairman and Leonard F. Manheim as secretary. The following formal motions were made, seconded, and duly carried:

1. That the Conference petition MLA for the formal organization of a permanent discussion group, under the title Literature and Psychology. [This motion was duly communicated to Mr. Parker, Secretary of the MLA, who replied that the application was rejected since "only a few can ever be so recognized, and those only after they have demonstrated, over a period of years, that there is a steady interest in their topic, shared by a great many more people than can be accommodated under the conference scheme."]

2. That if it became necessary to organize for 1951 as a conference, Mr. Basler be continued as chairman, Mr. Manheim as secretary, and that the chairman and secretary be empowered to designate three members to act as a steering committee [Pursuant to this motion, Professor Wayne Burns of the University of Washington and Dr. Eleanor Nicholes of the ~~Pforzheimer~~ Library, New York City, were designated as members of the Steering Committee. A third vacancy on the committee still remains to be filled.]

3. That the Conference issue a periodical News-Letter as a clearing-house for information on materials germane to the approach to literature through the use of psychology. The matter was referred to the Steering Committee to set up machinery for such a publication. [The present publication is being issued pursuant to action taken by the Steering Committee, and the mechanics for its continuance are set forth below.]

After a lively period of discussion concerning the values inherent in our specialized approach to literary criticism, the antipathies and prejudices to be encountered from without, and the dangers of ambiguity, schism, and technical terminology to be guarded against from within, the Conference adjourned at 12:30 PM.

Prospectus for the News-Letter

It is proposed that this News-Letter continue on a bi-monthly basis. Its first project will be the formulation of a bibliography on existing material using the critical approach to literature through the use of psychology, particularly the various schools of depth psychology. Members are therefore requested to submit material for such a bibliography. It will appear in installments in subsequent issues. It is suggested that preference be given to works written by students of literature rather than by professional psychologists and psychiatrists. Works may be in the form of books, unpublished theses or dissertations available on loan from university libraries or in microfilm, articles in periodicals, journals, etc., without any limitation as to language or country of publication. Wherever possible contributors are asked to include a few words of comment on the works submitted, for the use of the editorial committee. It is also proposed that the News-Letter include a listing of courses (if any) involving our specialized approach offered at various institutions. Suggested entries for this listing will also be highly appreciated.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

The issuance of this News-Letter will entail a certain amount of expense. It is therefore suggested that members who wish to receive it during the coming year

fill out the blank below and return it to the editor with a contribution of one dollar for the year. This will make it possible to issue a News-Letter of greater scope than the present issue.

It is also suggested that, in order to make it plain to MLA that there are many people interested in our specialty, the petition for the 1951 conference contain as many signatures as possible. A form for that purpose is also included below. If you are interested in the continuance of this conference and its work, please do the following:

1. Send in the application form for yourself and as many other persons interested as possible. Address all mail to the Secretary, at

38 Fern Street
Floral Park, Long Island
New York

2. Have the petition form executed and sent in by yourself and as many other persons interested as possible. [same address]

3. Send in contributions for the bibliography and for the listing of courses.

YOU MAY EXPECT TO HEAR FROM US AGAIN IN APRIL.

I. APPLICATION FORM

Please list me as a permanent member of the Conference and send me the News-Letter through the coming year. I enclose one dollar for each subscription.

(Full name--legibly printed--and institution with which you are associated)

(Address to which you wish the News-Letter to be sent)

Names and addresses of other interested persons:

II. PETITION FORM

The undersigned, a member of the Modern Language Association of America, hereby joins in a petition for a special conference to be held at the 1951 meeting of the Association on the topic: LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY. We desire that this be listed as an "open" conference and we designate the following persons to act as chairman and secretary, respectively:

Roy P. Basler, Chairman,
Leonard F. Manheim, Secretary.

Signatures of additional petitioners:

(Signature of petitioner)